

[REDACTED]

december 19, 1987

[REDACTED]

**IRAN-IRAQ-
SAUDI ARABIA:**

Ship Attacks

As ship attacks continue at high levels this month, Tehran's focus on Saudi-associated shipping is causing increasing alarm in Riyadh. [REDACTED]

Iran attacked two more tankers yesterday and another today—at least one of which was in trade with Saudi Arabia—according to press and shipping sources. Since October, more than half of the 28 ships attacked by Iran have been in the Saudi trade [REDACTED]

On Thursday, Iranian speedboats for the first time returned to fire on a previously hit ship, which was carrying Saudi cargo, as well as nearby tugboats and press helicopters. [REDACTED]

The Iranians presumably are trying to force Riyadh to reduce its aid to Iraq, to end its support for the US reflagging program, and to be more accommodating on oil matters. Tehran also may be demonstrating to Riyadh Iran's capacity for intensifying the tanker war if the Saudis refuse to placate Iran. [REDACTED]

Iran may be copying an Iraqi tactic in repeatedly attacking the same ships and by firing on tugboats. Both appear intent on inflicting more damage and slowing recovery operations. The Iranian speedboat crews' willingness to shoot at press helicopters increases the risk they might also fire on US Navy helicopters offering assistance to stricken tankers. [REDACTED]

There is no evidence that Tehran has focused its efforts specifically against Saudi-associated shipping. Because more than 40 percent of all Persian Gulf shipping is Saudi related, it is reasonable that a high percentage of ships attacked will be Saudi associated. [REDACTED]